

Message Text

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11

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 IO-10 DLOS-04 OFA-01 /083 W

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P R 200910Z NOV 75

FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5007

INFO AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

USLO PEKING

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 16664

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 1152: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, JA, NK

SUBJ: NORTH KOREAN-JAPANESE RELATIONS: GOJ PROTESTS SHOSEI

MARU INCIDENT

REF: TOKYO 16450 DTG 170951 NOV 75 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: IGNORING THREAT FROM PYONGYANG, GOJ ISSUED PROTEST
NOV 19 FOR ILLEGAL NK ACTION IN ATTACKING WITHOUT WARNING
JAPANESE FISHING TRAWLER IN INTERNAIONAL WATERS. WHEN
ISSUING PROTEST, VICE FONMIN REVEALED THAT JAPANESE EMBASSY
IN STOCKHOLM ATTEMPTED TO DELIVER PROTEST TO NK EMBASSY BUT
PHONE CALL WAS SUMMARILY TERMINATED. QUICK, FIRM PROTEST
SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN PROMPTED BY DOMESTIC POLITICAL
CONSIDERATIONS AS WELL AS TO ALERT PYONGYANG TO
JAPANESE DISPLEASURE. NEVERTHELESS, JAPANESE HAVE
SOUGHT TO MAKE DISTINCTION BETWEEN CURRENT PROTEST
AND LONGER TERM DESIRE TO OPEN CHANNELS AND IMPROVE
RELATIONS WITH PYONGYANG. END SUMMARY.

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1. FOLLOWING COMPLETION OF JAPANESE MARITIME SAFETY AGENCY REPORT WHICH INDICATED NORTH KOREANS ATTACKED JAPANESE TRAWLER IN INTERNATIONAL WATERS WITHOUT WARNING SEPT 2, THE GOJ VOICED STRONGLY WORDED PROTEST TO PYONGYANG NOV 19. AT PRESS CONFERENCE WHERE HE READ PROTEST, VICE FONMIN SATO MADE PUBLIC FACT THAT JAPANESE EMBASSY IN STOCKHOLM HAD ATTEMPTED TO DELIVER PROTEST TO NK EMBASSY NOV 17 AND 18. WHEN JAPANESE EMBASSY MENTIONED THAT SUBJECT OF CALL WAS PROTEST NOTE, NORTH KOREANS SUMMARILY DISCONNECTED THE CALL.

2. IN ADDITION TO STATING THAT SHOSEI MARU WAS IN INTERNATIONAL WATERS, GOJ PROTEST ASKED FOR PUNISHMENT OF NORTH KOREANS CONCERNED AND APPROPRIATE STEPS BY NK AUTHORITIES TO PREVENT RECURRENCE OF SIMILAR INCIDENTS AND RESERVED RIGHT TO CLAIM COMPENSATION FOR DAMAGES. GOJ ALSO ISSUED A "SUPPLEMENTARY EXPLANATION", HOWEVER, CONTAINING FOLLOWING NOTATIONS: A) NK CLAIMS THAT SHOSEI MARU WAS THOUGHT TO BE US OR ROK SPY SHIP: B) KIM IL-SUNG'S STATEMENT, "THEY PROBABLY WOULD NOT HAVE FIRED HAD THEY KNOWN THE SHIP WAS JAPANESE: C) NK HAD PAID SPEEDILY \$20,000 TO FAMILIES OF TWO FISHERMEN KILLED IN INCIDENT.

3. BUT, PROTEST STATED, SHOESI MARU WAS CLEARLY MARKED WITH JAPANESE FLAGS EASILY VISIBLE FROM FIFTY METERS AWAY WHERE NK SHIPS WERE: SHOSEI MARU DID NOT TRY TO FLEE, WAS NOT WARNED BY ANY MEANS, BUT WAS SUDDENLY FIRED UPON, KILLING ONE FISHERMAN IMMEDIATELY. FIRING CONTINUED UNTIL FINALLY ANOTHER FISHERMAN WAS DEAD AND TWO OTHERS WOUNDED. SHOSEI MARU CAPTAIN TAGAWA AND REST OF CREW WERE FORCED TO SIGN FALSE CONFESSION THAT SHIP WAS IN NORTH KOREAN TERRITORIAL WATERS, STATEMENT WHICH TAGAWA REPUDIATED NOV 14 (REFTEL).

4. FONMIN MIYAWAWA SEPARATELY TOLD PRESS THAT NK ACTION CLEARLY VIOLATED INTERNATIONAL LAW, BUT HE SAID THAT GOJ STEPS AGAINST ILLEGAL ACTION HAD NO CONNECTION WITH WHETHER TOKYO AND PYONGYANG HAD DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS.
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5. COMMENT: GOJ IGNORED A WARNING FROM PYONGYANG EARLIER THIS WEEK SAYING THAT JAPAN WOULD HAVE TO "BEAR THE CONSEQUENCES" IF A PROTEST WAS REGISTERED. PROMPT, UNEQUIVOCALLY WORDED PROTEST WAS PRIMARILY ADDRESSED TO DOMESTIC POLITICAL NECESSITIES. FOLLOWING REBUFF IN STOCKHOLM, FAILURE BY GOJ TO FOLLOW-THROUGH WOULD HAVE LEFT GOJ OPEN TO ATTACK FOR

WEAKNESS ON AN ISSUE WITH POTENTIAL FOR CAUSING STRONG EMOTIONAL AND POLITICAL REACTION. BEHIND POLITICAL DECISION TO ISSUE REMONSTRANCE TO PYONGYANG WERE LDP/BUSINESS INTERESTS (INCLUDING SHIGERU HORI), AND THE FISHING INDUSTRY. THESE PRESSURES BOLSTERED IN FRONT OF EYES BY EMOTIONAL CONTENT INHERENT IN ANY ISSUE INVOLVING JAPANESE AND KOREANS, WHETHER FROM NORTH OR SOUTH. BEARING OUT THIS POINT, WIDELY READ WEEKLY MAGAZINES HAVE INSISTED ON STRONG JAPANESE REACTION TO THE SHOSEI MARU INCIDENT. RESULT WAS DECISION BY GOJ TO REACT QUICKLY AND FORECAMELY, THE FIRST PROTEST AGAINST A COUNTRY WITH WHICH GOJ HAS NO DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS SINCE PROTEST IN 1975 TO SEOUL FOR UNILATERALLY DECLARING TERRITORIAL SEA LIMITS.

6. AT SAME TIME, AND DESPITE THE REBUFF IN STOCKHOLM, GOJ HAS TRIED TO SEPARATE THE SHOSEI MARU INCIDENT FROM THE LONGER TERM GOAL OF IMPROVING RELATIONS WITH PYONGYANG. MIYAZAWA'S COMMENT SUGGESTED THIS SEPARATION. REVELATION IN DEPT LAST WEEK BY FRONT ASIA BUREAU DIRECTOR NAKAE THAT GOJ WAS REVISING REGULATIONS CONCERNING CONTACTS BETWEEN NK AND JAPANESE OFFICIALS IS ANOTHER INDICATOR THAT OVER LONGER TERM GOJ HOPES TO ESTABLISH GOVERNMENTAL CHANNELS BETWEEN PYONGYANG AND TOKYO TO USE IN ABSENCE OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS. HODGSON

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